

THE DOMINANT MALE

ESSAYS AND PLAYS

ARNOLD DALY

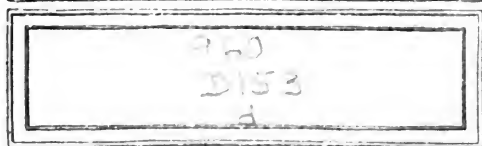
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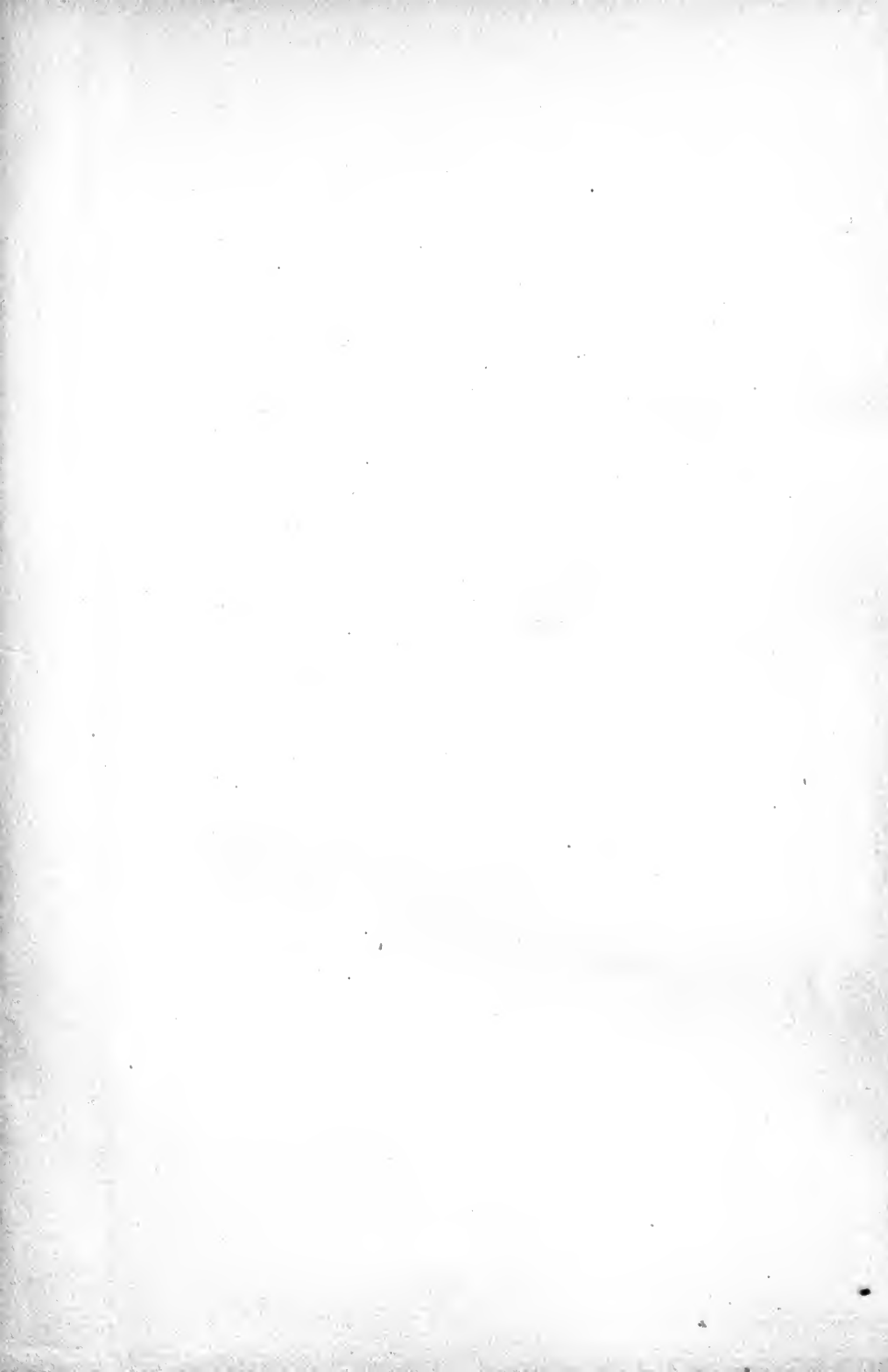


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DOMINANT MALE**



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ESSAYS AND PLAYS

BY
ARNOLD DALY



NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY

1921



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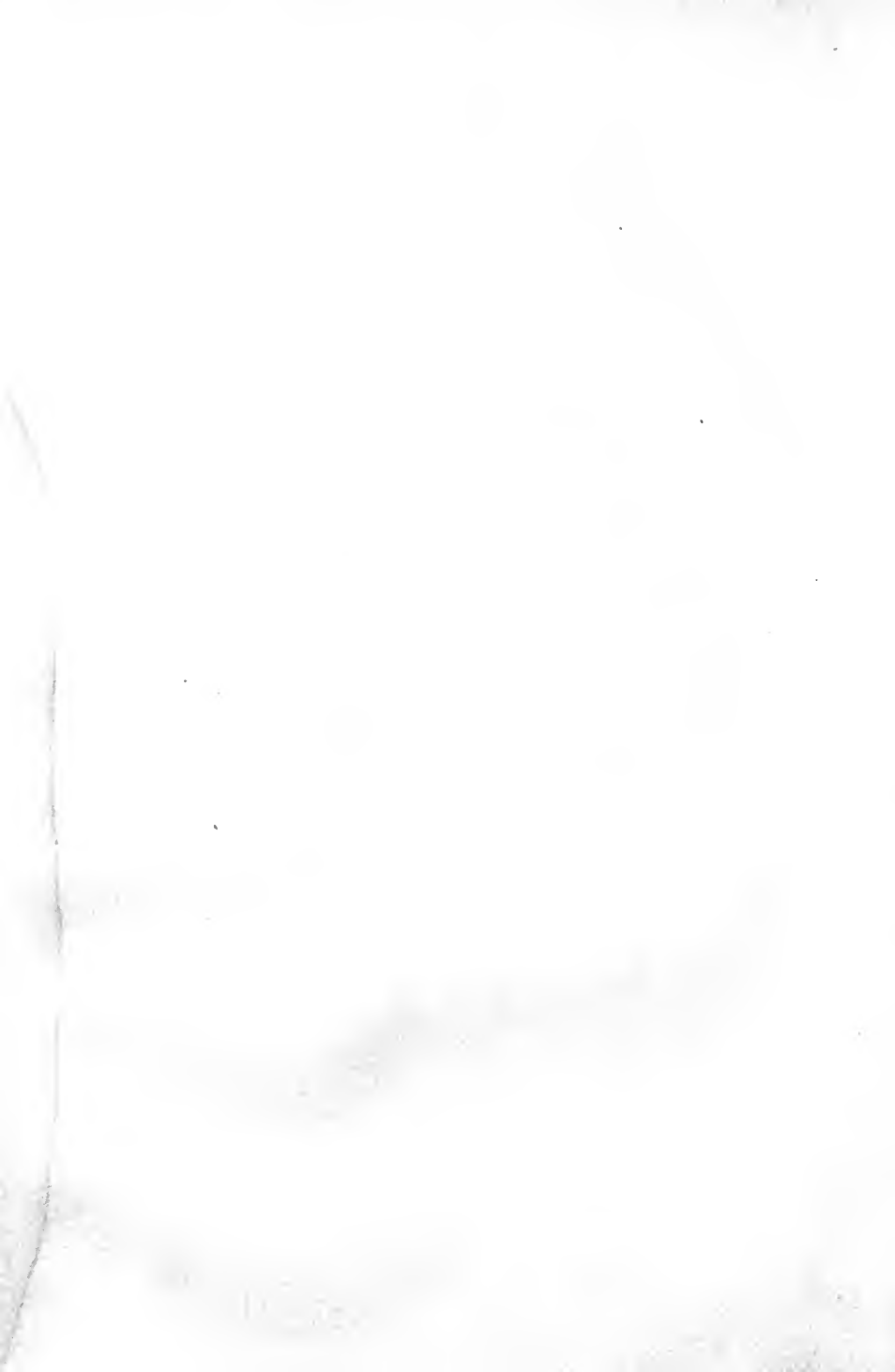
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THE
DOMINANT MALE

A Comment on Suffrage

In One Act



THE DOMINANT MALE

Cast

A MAN

A WOMAN

A WAITER

SCENE I

SCENE: A lonely hut on a mountain side in America.

The play opens with the man crouching over a miserable fire in a very small and decidedly ill-kept room. A gun is in a corner of the room and a belt containing a revolver lies thrown up on the table. One or two wild skins are on the floor and a couple of smaller ones tacked on the walls. A half dozen very frayed books are placed in a pathetic looking rack on the wall. There is a door in the upper left hand corner of the room and below the door is a small window which is rather heavily blurred with snow. After the curtain rises the man starts as though he had heard an unusual sound. As he listens a low moaning is heard and as he turns up the room the moaning increases and something is heard falling heavily against the door. He strides towards it and pulls it quickly open.

[II]



THE DOMINANT MALE

Cast

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A WOMAN

A WAITER

SCENE I

SCENE: A lonely hut on a mountain side in America.

The play opens with the man crouching over a miserable fire in a very small and decidedly ill-kept room. A gun is in a corner of the room and a belt containing a revolver lies thrown up on the table. One or two wild skins are on the floor and a couple of smaller ones tacked on the walls. A half dozen very frayed books are placed in a pathetic looking rack on the wall. There is a door in the upper left hand corner of the room and below the door is a small window which is rather heavily blurred with snow. After the curtain rises the man starts as though he had heard an unusual sound. As he listens a low moaning is heard and as he turns up the room the moaning increases and something is heard falling heavily against the door. He strides towards it and pulls it quickly open.

[II]

Then out of the night, ushered in with a fanfare of wailing snow flakes, the body of a woman tumbles on the floor. The wind, which had been howling mournfully, now rises on a keen note as though angry with defeat. The man quickly picks her up, closes the door, then carries her to the fire and puts her in the chair he had been occupying, which, by the way, is the one comfortable article of furniture in the room. He then takes a glass and bottle from the cupboard, pours out a small drink and rubbing her hands gently at the same time he says:

THE MAN

That's the idea, don't try for a minute, take your time.

[Giving her drink]

Only, after you're rested I'd be curious to know what you're doing roaming around on the top of Cato's Ridge at eleven o'clock at night. It's not very strange of course, not much stranger than seeing Saint Peter buying bonnets on the Rue de la Paix, or the Devil swinging incense on a Saint's Day. I've heard of odd things happening, sister, but you've rather pulled the big surprise. It's even funnier than my finding gold and I've been looking for that for years. What's the idea?

[The girl has recovered enough to smile at his attempts to cheer her]

THE GIRL

'Tisn't quite the correct hour for even an informal call, is it?

THE MAN *[smiling]*

Not exactly. However, in these parts we're just a trifle — informal — sorry I can't offer you a cigarette — I've only got — *[Indicates pipe]*.

THE GIRL *[coolly]*

Thanks, I have some.

[Takes cigarette case from pocket. He holds match to light her cigarette during following speech]

THE MAN

Judging by your dress the idea seems to be you've been riding.

THE GIRL *[grimly]*

A little —

THE MAN

It's a pretty dress — not quite the sort they wear around here though. The last time I saw a costume like that was — but that's not the point. I'm curious to know how and

why you drop from the clouds, out of the storm, into the hut of a lonely disappointed, miserable, would-be miner like myself.

THE GIRL

It's really much simpler than it appears — do you know the Elkin ranch?

THE MAN

In the Samoa Valley — of course.

THE GIRL

Well, my brother and I are visiting them — Sally Elkins was my room-mate at school. This morning Wally and I — Wally is my brother, you know — well, we started out for a ride and we stopped at such a quaint old place for lunch — some Mexican name I've forgotten. Anyhow after lunch we thought we could ride on a little further and make a detour, instead of riding back over the same road — the old Mexican told us that we could. So off we started — we took the first turning to the right — I remember distinctly that was what he told us to do, and then we rode on and on. It was very beautiful — so very beautiful and calm — with such a strange sense of grandeur, that we felt that it didn't matter if we never turned back — something seemed to woo us

on — a strange elusive silent appeal — you know what I mean — you see, I've only ridden in the East before.

THE MAN

I understand.

THE GIRL

Finally we came to where two roads forked — Wally thought that I had better wait while he went forward and investigated. Well, there I waited, and waited, and waited. Finally my patience gave out and I followed down the road he had taken — only to discover after riding about half a mile that I was in a quandary again. Once more two roads faced me. In desperation I chose the one to the left this time and rode on calling for Wally, but it must have been the wrong trail. Then the twilight fell and with it came the snow — quietly at first — it fell so softly, in great flakes. It seemed as though God was opening his hand and dropping an anodyne to send a restless stupid world to sleep. Before me through the white snow the mountains appeared like a huge purple coverlet. Around me the red woods seemed to stand like great friendly sentinels, and my spirit whispered — Rest, Rest, Rest, Nature will cover and guard you, so potent was the

charm that I had to make an effort to continue. A great sob rose in my throat and I realized that the beauty of the night was choking me. Then I cried with the joy of it all. I didn't care where I was or what happened to me, and so I rode on. The snow fell more rapidly now — as it grew darker the wind began to moan around me and I felt afraid. I realized the horse was climbing the mountain and wondered where he was taking me. On and on and on he went until it seemed that I had ridden since the beginning of time. Now he stumbled and I was nearly thrown — no, he's up again — a branch of a tree sweeps my hat off and I bend lower in the saddle realizing that if I fall it may mean a thousand feet. Finally before me I saw a light and urged the horse forward. Oh, if I could only tell you what that light meant to me! I couldn't wait — I slipped from the saddle and ran forward. Then, just as I reached the door, things seemed to turn around and — and that's all I remember.

THE MAN

[Moving to the window]

You've had a trying time.

[Peering out the window]

The horse is all right — he's found his way to the shed. I'll go out presently and unsaddle him.

THE GIRL [*starting up*]

Oh, you mustn't do that — After he's had a little rest I must start back. Wally will be worried to death.

THE MAN

Start back? Have you any idea how far it is to the Elkins ranch?

THE GIRL

I'm afraid not.

THE MAN [*smiling*]

It's fifty miles. You could make it in a day in fine weather. Of course with this storm its impossible.

THE GIRL [*gasping*]

Impossible!

THE MAN

Surely.

[*Again looks out window*]

If I'm any judge you'll be lucky if you get out of here in three days, and if she gets any worse, why you may be held up for two weeks — maybe a month.

THE GIRL [*horrificed*]

You're joking.

THE MAN

No, there's nothing very funny about one of these storms.

THE GIRL

But I can't live here for three days — why how — how —

THE MAN

I don't see what else there is to do. I'll make you as comfortable as I can.

THE GIRL

But — but — where will you sleep?

THE MAN

I'm afraid I'll have to bunk here also, unless of course you want me to sleep in the snow.

THE GIRL [*confusedly*]

No, no, of course not — only — well, dear me, I don't know what to say.

THE MAN

Catastrophes do destroy conventions, don't they?

THE GIRL

What will people think?

[18]

THE MAN [*laughing*]

Fear of our neighbor's opinion, eh? The ruler of the world.

THE GIRL

What is?

THE MAN

The emotion that governs you now,— Fear — it comes first — the sentimentalist would tell you that love is all — the Financier, Ambition — the soldier, duty and the world will cry in unison — Honor — but they are all empty words in comparison with fear. Fear of our neighbor's opinion — that's what governs us all in the end.

THE GIRL

It sounds very cynical.

THE MAN

Does it? That's strange then, from an optimist. For surely a man is an optimist who spends four years in these dreary mountains in the silly pursuit of gold — it wasn't so hard at first; I had a partner for two years, but sense came to his rescue and he gave it up. I persisted — there's gold here and I'll find it I said — and I won't leave these cursed mountains until I do.

[He crosses and fills his pipe, then sits near girl on a low stool]

THE GIRL

Why do you curse the mountains — they are beautiful.

THE MAN

That's what every tourist thinks — and of course they are for a while — a week or two — even a month, but live in them always — as I have — for four years, hemmed in often by the storm as we are now, caught like a rat in a trap with nothing but that dreary white wall outside staring one in the face — staring so contemptuously — finally hunger drives you forth and death bids you welcome if you miss your footing by half an inch and slip in a friendly looking crevice, or if its fine the sun will burn you mercilessly in the day and at night the cold will seek your very heart.

[Now his voice sinks to a whisper as tho he were confessing something]

But worst of all constantly they will remind you of your own insignificance, each day making you feel smaller — for each day they appear greater — so silent — so massive — so impenetrable — so constant and always the same with huge stone eyes and

cold glistening face staring at the sun defiantly. Live here if you would know Dante's inferno.

THE GIRL

[Looking at him sharply, speaks quietly]

You need a change — new surroundings — why don't you go East?

THE MAN *[savagely]*

I came for gold and I'll not leave without it — it's here and I'll find it. If I fail, the buzzards can croak their triumph — they may even if I win, for the chase has made me weary and I fear that my palate has become stale and alas, I may find the gold indigestible.

[Then, with a sudden change, lashing himself into a fury with the memory of what he has suffered]

If you only knew what it means to be alone for two years in this desolate hell, — I've read those books *[pointing to bookshelves]* until I've worn them out. I could almost quote them word for word — sometimes I'd attempt to send for more, but the silence had sung a drooning song in my ears that made all mental effort an apathetic useless gesture — the mountains each day seemed to press closer around me until I felt that if I reached into my body and dragged out my heart I'd

grasp only a dried withered husk — the world seemed far away. I lived in an empty meaningless space — nothing was real —

[He stops — a thought has struck him — he looks at her keenly — then laughs ironically]

THE GIRL

What's that for?

THE MAN

It's just struck me that if you hadn't taken the wrong trail, I'd still be mooning over my loneliness — funny thing accident — some people call it fate; after all, you are real — wonderfully real and you've got to stay here until the storm clears — yes, even after — until the trail is safe —

[A thought strikes him — he speaks slowly now]

And then you'll leave — go back — the loneliness will come again — unless —

THE GIRL

Unless what?

THE MAN

Unless I keep you here.

THE GIRL

You're joking.

THE MAN [*grimly*]

I'm not.

THE GIRL [*laughs*]

This isn't melodrama — of course, with the storm and the hut on the mountain side I know it looks like it — but it isn't — it's life — it's real — you've been very kind — after all, you're a gentleman, not a border ruffian.

THE MAN

I wonder if there is any difference between the two — In certain situations I fancy not — as you say, it's life — it's real. — Well, here we are — we two — you, a beautiful girl — I wonder if you know how beautiful you are sitting there — and I a visionary — a dealer in dreams — The gold up to now has been a phantom — to date my life is a failure. — I would not count it so if I held you in my arms — think of it — why should I let you go — the one real, beautiful thing I've known?

THE GIRL [*indignantly*]

Why —

THE MAN

Oh, I know what you would say — your brother will eventually find us and shoot me — perhaps — that is if I don't shoot first

— or perhaps you think you could appeal to my sense of pity — what a fool I'd be — cheat myself — forego a great reality for an attitude — No, I've made up my mind — I'll live this night and perhaps — who knows — tomorrow I may see the mountains — as you do — beautiful —

[He rises — she starts to her feet terror-stricken — her eyes staring — he advances toward her slowly as

THE CURTAIN DESCENDS

SCENE II

SCENE: The exterior of a hotel at a French watering resort — Twenty-three years later.

As the curtain rises we discover the heroine of the first scene sitting at the left side of a table placed a little to the left center of stage — the table is set for two — an attentive waiter stands back of the table awaiting Madame's commands — she is busily reading letters — a cablegram lies amongst the letters — she has read — she is still a good-looking woman — stout now and comfortable looking, though a trifle formidable — with a decidedly commanding air — glasses add the glacial touch that make her first cousin to a bank President. The waiter is the typical well bred sort one finds in a first class French resort — the back drop showing the country side is sufficient excuse for any tourist.

THE WAITER

I placed Madame's table in this secluded corner so that Monsieur would not be disturbed — yesterday I noticed that the other guests stared so when you had *déjeuner* on the terrace. Monsieur was annoyed, but he must forgive — their curiosity is natural

— 100 million — Mon Dieu! — Madame, is it possible?

SHE [*reading letter*]

I daresay I never counted it.

WAITER

And to get it all out of the ground — a gold mine — it's miraculous —

SHE

A gold mine gives out finally — your mineral springs never do — I'd rather own — those.

WAITER

Madame is pleased to joke —

SHE

I never joke — only common people do — you remember your orders —

WAITER

Oui — Oui — Madame — Monsieur is not to have any coffee — nothing but the slice of cold ham — a glass of milk and dry toast. It shall be as Madame orders — you may depend upon me — And Monsieur may depend upon the Doctor and our famous waters — He will soon be himself again.

SHE

Let us hope so.

[*He comes from the entrance to the hotel which is on the right side of the stage. A glance tells us that here we have one who has lived not wisely but too well. (The waiter obsequiously places chair for him and then exits into hotel.) Gout has laid its heavy hand upon him—he looks all of his fifty-five years and a trifle more—a practical looking cane supports his progress toward the table—his right foot is bandaged and covered with a comfortable house slipper—as he advances and sits right of table SHE speaks*]

SHE

There is a telegram from Jack—he's motoring from Paris to spend a few days with us, says he wants to help us celebrate—I suppose you know what tomorrow is—

[*He looks up inquiringly*]

No, of course you've forgotten.

[*He looks startled, starts to speak—she continues*]

Don't tell me that it's Wednesday—I know that—I mean, have you any idea what your son is coming to celebrate? Naturally not—well, it's the twenty-third

anniversary of our marriage — I don't mean our first vulgar marriage in that common hut — the very memory of that half drunken traveling parson makes me faint — I mean our marriage in the East at St. Thomas' — amongst my people — after you had struck oil — as you termed it — Oh! the memory of that first hideous ceremony; sometimes I wake in the night — shaking with fear thinking that some day Violet or Jack will discover the secret of that first loathsome wedding. By the way, there is a letter from Violet — she asks if she may join us for her holiday — she complains that Vassar is so lonely since Diana Van Renselaer left. I think, however, that she had better spend her summer with the Draytons. Young Frank will be home his mother writes me — and I think they had better see something of each other — it would be an excellent match.

[The waiter returns with and serves petit déjeuner of thin slice of ham — dry toast and glass of milk and immediately retires upstage within call]

[The Man looks at the milk, then up at his mentor as a stricken deer would look at his executioner — She glares severely and continues her monologue]

SHE

I hope it will not be necessary to remind you that you are under no circumstances to ask for coffee. The doctor says that if you disobey again he will throw up the case. Yesterday he saw you smoking outside the casino — you know its bad for you — besides which it's a filthy habit — what you can see in it is beyond me. I need hardly tell you that its thoroughly absurd, even childish to come here, burying me in this outlandish place for three weeks unless you intend to take your cure seriously. Henri told him that yesterday morning you insisted on ham and eggs — ham and eggs in July — no wonder you are ill, but there — why talk sense to a man about food — when I think of what you ate and drank in all these years, I wonder that you're alive at all.

[He takes a newspaper from his pocket and starts to prop it against the toast rack]

How often must I tell you that a gentleman does not read his newspaper at the breakfast table when his wife is present. Really in all these years one would imagine that you might have overcome your mining camp manners and don't forget your mud bath at twelve, and your massage at one.

What you would do without me I can't imagine —

[She goes into the hotel — he stares front a moment with eyes unseeing — then wakes as though from an ugly dream, beckons the waiter to him — the waiter hurries — all attention — he whispers to the waiter, who raises his hands with a gesture of frightened amazement]

THE WAITER

But Monsieur — it is forbidden — Madame would —

[The Man interrupts with an authoritative gesture, takes bank note from pocket and gestures the waiter to hurry — again stares front a moment — then sighs — takes newspaper from pocket and places it against toast rack, takes out cigar, lights it — draws gratefully at the weed and slowly ejects the smoke. The waiter returns with pot of coffee and cup — pours coffee, adds a little milk from glass — looking anxiously meanwhile toward the hotel]

[When HE has finished he steps toward the entrance like a conspirator]

THE WAITER

I will observe, it is better —

[The man sips the coffee — his eyes on the

paper, then smokes again, slowly the hand holding the cigar falls to his knee — he looks front again, a far-away wistful expression on his face — he sighs deeply and says]

Oh! If she only hadn't taken the wrong trail that night —

[AS THE CURTAIN FALLS]

There is no such a thing as credit or blame.
June, 1920

PLAYING GOLF

GOLF is like a love affair. There's no fun in it unless you take it seriously, and if you do, it breaks your heart. A really great comedian, Dan Daly (no relation, sorry to say), characterized it years ago in that perfect musical comedy "The Belle of New York." Said Dan, with that inimitable sepulchral drawl. "You place a ball upon the ground, then you hit it; if you find the ball the same day you hit it, you win the game."

At cure resorts, doctors, with the fluent idiocy that not only fascinates but commands admiration, frequently prescribed the game for tired or over-wrought nerves. Oh, Allah! Mrs. Allah, and even Henry and Michaela Allah, I cry you mercy! The victim obediently, with a child-like stare of innocence, goes to his doom, and later in a darkened room, with the usual white-robed, soft-spoken nurse in attendance, babbles of brooks and forests, "Three up and I haven't won a hole. How the h—ll was I to know that ditch was there? *That's* a nice place for a bunker.

Yesterday the tee was over there; the course was hard enough then. Why don't they tell a feller when they are going to move it? They told me the ninth was easy, just a mashie shot to the green, a nice short hole; *very nice*, a lake on one side and a jungle on the other. Annie Oakley couldn't do it with a rifle." Then the nurse lifts his head gently, bidding him forget it (forget it? if he only could). He gulps a foul tasting mixture of bromide and falls back on the pillow with twitching nerves and a heart aching with profanity.

They say to play golf well one must keep in practice. I have always assured my friends most earnestly that there lies the reason for my poor game. How can one play well flirting with clubs only once, or at most, twice a year? I have often left the long grass and hurriedly caught up with a companion on the fairway to explain this. Why is it that one's friends become so narrow minded the moment they touch a golf club? Sticking in a ridiculous way to a sort of mid-Victorian conservative attitude, mentally, towards the game. After all, primarily the object of the game is exercise. How can one get much exercise walking the straight line down a fairway? And then it shows such a boar-like

ignorance of the beauties of nature. There, for instance, just to left is a forest, so peaceful that your very soul pauses to listen, and your spirit sighs and ceases longing. Drive in there, say I, and promptly do so. What a splendid gift the sense of exploration! Then after breaking a niblick in getting out, and incidentally landing in the tall grass on the opposite side of the course, there is splendid solace in the thought that at least your game has the virtue of Catholicity — nothing narrow minded about it. I have explained all this laboriously often only to find that my companion wasn't listening. Instead he removes a pipe from a particularly ugly face, points with an arm at a peculiarly awkward angle at a tiny white spot on the green close to the flag, and says, with eyes seeking applause, "How's that for a second?" Not waiting for an answer he stalks away, muttering something about par being four and that he's got a possible three. "But then," I mused, staring after his ungainly form, "if after all you choose as a companion a man in commercial life it serves you right. What can you expect? He has the soul of a frog (now preparing to play five) the imagination of a kippered herring (look at the ball, you ninny — keep your head down) and the sen-

sitiveness of a Hun. FORE! No luck, I missed him. I am up anyhow. No, — I'm over; *in the ditch again*. Well I *am* damned!

Yesterday one of the five beautiful women of the world arrived here. No — I shan't name the other four, nor shall I tell you whom she is, except to mention casually that Vanity Fair published her picture last month, and that she spent a small fortune and two years of her time in Belgium in relief work. Her declared intention in coming here was to reduce her weight twenty pounds. Charity had eaten into her brain until finally it included the entire male race. "I will make myself hideous," said she. "Then let us hope men will forget me and go on with the serious business of the world." I asked her to play golf. She consented charmingly. "Just what I need," she crooned, "to get this fat off" (Shades of Aphrodite and moans of Chrysis, that's what she called it). "I must warn you, however, that I haven't played for years and I'll probably spoil your game (Ha ha) though I once won a medal at Deauville." We started out. I was astonished to find that I had met the second human being I have ever been able to beat at the bonny game. "This is murder," I muttered, as I brought her home 5 down. Over the

iced tea, which a too attentive sun had raised to the height of a luxurious emotion, her bewildering hazel eyes assumed a thoughtful tint. "I think that tomorrow I'll go around with the pro for an hour first." I gulped my disappointment. "Then play with you after, if I may" — the "if I may" delivered with a smile that would have caused "The Son of the Morning" to groan with envy for the banal reason of his fall.

The next day a happy man and a strangely confident woman paused for a moment on the first tee to drink in the beauty of the morning. Birds sang, and, strange to say, not too noisily. Peace, utter peace, hung in the air. We stood on a bluff, a murmuring brook between us and the first hole. How truly charming it looked — then — the Greenbrier Mountain before us stretched its lazy indolent beauty, indulgently, as far as the eye could reach. Old Kate's Mountain behind us reared its green head protectingly. "Nobody looks at me," sighed Miss Greenbrier coquettishly to a sunbeam — "and yet I am beautiful. I wonder why?" The sunbeam, too shy to answer, carried the complaint to old Kate's.

"Tell my daughter," said she, shaking her hoary head slowly, "she should have been born

abroad — then her countrymen would have admired her vastly.” But the sunbeam could not understand this, and after thinking it over for a moment, disappeared in great chagrin.

“The valley of the green wall,” the beautiful one spoke again — “How dear it was of nature to keep the horrid world outside. I only gazed at her pityingly — my thoughts on the game — so fair a thing to be despoiled — “it’s brutal,” I thought, but “it’s the game,” the next thought shot in grimly. “Won’t you take the honor?” I said, with what I intended for a charming smile, although a startled look on the caddie’s face made me a trifle uneasy as to its efficacy.

“What will you give me?” she asked. “My life,” I answered, huskily, “I mean a stroke a hole.”

She tried a practise swing. “Very good,” I murmured indulgently. “Don’t forget to keep your head down.” Then she hit it a gentle, slow, rhythmic stroke and the ball sailed its dutiful course *over* the brook — on to the fairway — a good 175 yards at least. She looked up radiant. “Isn’t that splendid,” she gasped, delightedly. I acquiesced with an insane leer.

“But of course you’ll beat it,” she purred

— “you drive so splendidly.” After that, of course, I approached the ball as negligently as one may expect a King to do anything. With careless, even debonair ease, I drove the ball — straight into the brook.

“What a pity,” said she, “try another.”

I gazed at her and, presto! My mind flew back 20 years. I was fishing — the scene Lake St. Clair — a friend with me — and his young son aged 7 — 4 hours in the broiling sun — nary a bite — and the lad pulling them in until his arms ached — he pauses from his joyful labor long enough to note my expression. “Never mind,” said he, touching me affectionately on the arm. “I’ll give you all my small ones.” I was startled to find the same murder in my heart for my fair companion that I felt for the boy twenty long years ago.

I drove another ball. This time I got over in the long grass. “That’s better,” murmured Diana, “much better. Don’t forget you are giving me a stroke a hole. We descended the hillside — somehow the beauty of the day had faded. In two strokes more I managed to get on to the fairway — but my heart — Oh, my God! my heart, how heavy it was —” “Let me see,” she puzzled, “what club shall I use now?” “Your midiron, of

course," I answered "the hole is just over that bunker." "No," said she slowly, "I think" (looking at her bag as a child looks at a platter of French pastry) "I'll take this one," fishing out a brassie. "You'll go over it with that," I warned, but she only smiled at me wisely. "I don't use this club very well," she cooed, "somehow I don't seem to get the hang of it. Perhaps I'd better take a practise swing." I looked back nervously to the first tee and saw the worst exhibition of bad acting ever witnessed by mortal man — a foursome pretence at concealing impatience.

"Now, how was it he told me to stand," she continued, "I never can remember" — "Oh dear, I suppose I'll miss it," and then she hit it, and the marvel was, the world went on just the same — the birds sang — the sun shone — the breeze gently swept by us — and the ball lay on the green. Now she betrayed a kinship to a bank cashier. "Let me see," she cried, her eyes glistening, "that's two, isn't it? And you played two from the tee — we should count it three — but we'll call it two then two out of the long grass — that's four. Now you're playing five; yes, that's right — 5," she breathed victoriously.

Now the devil had me — I don't know

that he wanted me — but whether or no, he had me, and was probably sorry for the job. I played savagely, sullenly, desperately.

But why continue a tale of defeat — mortification, anger — black, black misery — all the pain and sorrow of the world were mine —

The Queen brought me home 6 down. As we passed the Old White she paused to admire its simple Colonial lines. “They say,” said she reflectively — “that General Washington used to dance on the very floor that’s in the ball room now.” “Did he?” I answered absently, “I wonder what he went round in?”

*Golf is like a love affair. There is no
fun in it unless you take it seriously
and if you do, it breaks your heart.*

White Sulphur Springs
1916

FATHER AND SON

A CONTEMPORANEOUS OPINION

In space indefinable there sat the figure of a man. His brow was not broader than a continent — nor his eye deeper than the sea, therefore, these things one did not notice — but the great lines of suffering about the beautiful mouth made all those who saw, long to succor and serve him eternally. It was strange that whilst he sat in the shadow — a wonderful light seemed to emanate from him. It blinded and kept all prostrate for centuries until they understood — then it warmed them in a glow indescribable.

An old man leaning on a great staff stood at his left as though awaiting a final order. His great white beard trailed at his feet — trailed on and on and on until one wondered where it ended. It was long enough and beautiful enough to clothe all the children in the world — the staff trembled in his hand — surely if he did not rest, he must fall and die? But he knew that the figure before

him needed rest more than anything that was ever known, so he only leaned forward, the better to listen, for the other was about to speak. Slowly the great mouth opened and the sound of many deep bells was heard.

"All the planets are at peace — Saturn, Jupiter, Venus — all — even Mars, all but one," said he, "and that I gave to my youngest son — my best beloved to tend. He will not fail us, therefore, at last we may rest — we may sleep eternally — my work will be done."

He raised his head, and it seemed that a mountain moved. Then the face softened unutterably. He spoke again: "I hear him — He comes. Thou shalt hear his report — Thine old ears drink in his success — Rest! — Think on it — Hurry — greet and admit him."

The old man trembled so that he must needs bid the wind cease ere he moved — then he started slowly away.

The seated figure gazed before him. The lines of pain left the face as the great arms were folded o'er his chest. Then out of the shadow there stepped the figure of a man — the face was so tenderly beautiful that looking upon it, strangely enough, the first great longing was to see it smile — yet the mouth

plainly showed that it had never done that. This man had never known laughter. He wore a strange sort of headdress from which drops of blood coursed down his brow, also there was blood upon his hands, yea, even upon his feet.

His eyes, like two great pools of truth held a wistful longing — a great, great sadness that seemed to mirror all the tragedy of the world — His shoulders drooped — slowly he hung his head. Then he spoke. His voice sounded like the wind whispering the unrest of men in a low moan:

“Father, I have come.”

The old man came from the shadow leaning on his staff and gazed upon the two wonderingly. The Father turned and looked upon the boy.

“What strange wreath is this thou dost affect?”

“Thorns,” answered the Son.

Then the question came like a thunder clap —

“Wherefore?”

“A gift from my children —”

“When?”

“Some two thousand years ago.”

“But since —”

“Alas! There has been no reason to re-

move them. I may not do so until they learn to love."

The Father gazed at his son for a long time — the old man tore his beard in anguish. Finally the Father spoke:

"Then thou hast failed?"

His voice was harsh with defeat and surprise. The Son lowered his head, and when he answered, his voice moaned all the misery of the universe as he whispered:

"I have failed."

The Father rose, a great fierce light shone from his eyes. He reached out his arm — the boy sank upon his knees. The old man made a gesture of appeal. Looking long upon the Son's pitiable figure, finally the great face softened. He leaned forward and gently raised the kneeling form and held it tenderly in his arms for a moment, and then sat him by his side. He had but just then observed the ragged holes in each hand, and upon each foot.

After a long pause during which the Son cried softly, the Father spoke:

"Thou shalt speak of this —"

The Son raised his head, the eyes swimming in a sea of tears. The Father looked at him closely and understood that those eyes had wept until it seemed that they could weep no

more. Then a strange feeling of pride came over him, for he realized that only his Son could find more tears for an unworthy world.

The Son clasped his hand and began:

"It's simply told — I knew when thou did'st send me of thy great faith and I was happy. I went confident, believing in them, but alas, I found only mediocrity, greed, bestiality — even so, I thought the cure simple. I will die for these men. It is the only way. That will waken them, and so I arranged it, after gathering a few wise men about me. I left my message, and then it was done. They stoned me and sent me to thee thus —" holding up his hands — "and the man who sentenced me, the next day forgot my name, but after all I must not chide him for that, for, —" here the lips almost smiled — "I have forgotten his."

"But after?" — The Father asked impatiently.

"I said that I'd return," the Son answered. "But I felt it useless, useless. Two thousand years I waited for a sign — the slightest gesture whereby I could hope, but it did not come. Finally into the mind of a madman came a desire to dominate. Another had played that game before him and failed but he thought his predecessor an amateur at

arms — and so he sounded the drum — in your name.”

“In my name” — the great face blazed its amazement.

“Always when they fight it is in your name” — the Son answered. “It is a game they play, ‘In God’s name,’ one cries, and points out the enemy as ‘Sons of Lucifer.’ — It is necessary. They must find a reason, for they dare not tell the people the real one. None would fight, — not openly, if their leaders proclaimed ‘It is all for money’ — and so they call loudly upon ‘Honor, Virtue, Patriotism and *You*.’ Loudly the drums sounded. Now madness was loose. I thought to raise my hand and then I paused — a thought had come to me. My death had created crucifixes, plaster casts and paintings and they thought their debt was paid to you. What if I gave rein to this madness for a while? Would that waken them? I thought to try — and closed my eyes.”

Now the Son paused a long time. The lines of pain had deepened about the Father’s mouth. The old man standing near swayed upon his staff and moaned. Blood trickled into the Son’s eyes and mingled with his salt tears unheeded. He continued, his voice now like a wailing wind — “Ten million — ten

million — ten million souls tricked, as a tribute to Greed."

"Whereas I had thought to shock them — again I had failed — I failed!" Now the tears rained down. "Failed! For my children were not cold in their graves — the ink not dry upon their brother's peace papers — when they were forgotten, and the world went quickly about building, *again to destroy*. For *all* built upon greed, messengers of commerce, each rushing to the peace table to have the button sewn on his coat — their own negligence of *you* had lost. A pageant of victory to the dead — Parades to lull and soothe the public conscience — honors and riches heaped upon the vultures, whilst the melodramatic, pretentious lie leapt higher and higher looking down upon the fools, screaming a hideous laughter in its triumph — the futility of peace without kneeling to Thee and asking Thy direction never occurred to them." Here he paused — then resumed sadly, "There were Three who were elected leaders, One a tiger, at bargaining in the guise of Justice. His people, loving money most, cried privilege in the name of Art — whilst denying that any other nation possessed it.

"Another, an arch politician, would win by any means, for his people cried peace, whilst

possessing three-quarters of the globe. The third, from the land of 'Don'ts and Isms,' a mere pawn in their hands, dreaming of a sainthood, imagined that he could sit by Thy side on the score of ambition.

"All, each and every one, were deaf to my whisper that they should kneel each day and commune with Thee to seek thy counsel. Whither art they going? I know not. I pray Thee, Father, give me peace of them —" and the Son fell at his Father's feet.

The Father made one hopeless movement and then his face grew stern. Slowly he turned and faced his Son.

"Thou shalt return," he said. "Thou knowest that I may not rest until they are at peace. This task I gave to Thee, my youngest, my best beloved, thinking I had given thee genius — knowing that they were the most difficult, I trusted Thee; When I sent thee, in thy youthful confidence, thou didst not think it necessary to consult Me. Thou *thoughtest them worth dying for* — I could have told Thee that they were not. Thou shalt go back!" and now his voice rose, as though to wake the mountains. "Only this time it shall be as I say."

The Son raised a piteous face pleading, terror shining from his eyes as he shrank

back, the blood upon his brow, hands and feet congealing.

"Nay, thou shalt return," the Father decreed — "Shall I never rest?"

The Son gazed upon his Father in great awe, the tears raining down, and down, and down. The old man swayed upon his staff and fell, tearing his beard and moaning.

December, 1920.

JAMES STEPHENS

AN APPRECIATION

IT was dusk. At the end of the dusty road was a village which has a quaint, restful look, and so we entered.

Near to the market place we saw a dozen sweating men pulling down a fountain. They had not the look of vandals; yet the thing seemed wanton and I paused to ask the reason.

One of the men wiped his brow with a brawny hand, and said:

“Women do not need drink; and men will find it, anyhow.”

To this I said: “The fountain is beautiful — why destroy it?”

“It’s this way,” the man replied. “This village is charitable, above all other things; and we need this space that we may cure certain men who are suffering of a grave unrest. In place of the fountain, we mean to set up a great ball of yarn, then these afflicted ones may come and knit all through

the day; also they may gossip and confide their thoughts to each other. In this way other men will be spared."

"But what men are these whom you would thus occupy?" I inquired.

"They are the young neurasthenic Christs," said he, and counted them upon his strong fingers. "By name they are: Wells, Galsworthy and Conrad — all Englishmen. Then there is a Frenchman, Brieux; and of Russians, God help us, there are many — Tolstoi, Gorky, Dostoyevsky, Porebyshewski and so on, to the end of time."

"But," cried I, appalled, "these are men of letters!"

He only wagged a stubborn head.

"Some of them, indeed, seem to have the great gift; but all of them have misunderstood its purpose."

"Why, then," said I, "Since you are sitting so confidently in judgment, in the hands of what modern scrivener is the gold of thought, who also knows its value?"

He looked at me a moment; then I saw the big shoulders give a hopeless twitch. He said, quite simply —

"Why James Stephens."

To understand a snub is a gift in itself; and so I resumed my journey. At the out-

skirts of the village my terrier looked back at me, and I saw that he was angry.

"To show your ignorance so!" said he. "It is too bad."

I took the trouble to catch up with him, for, after all, he is a good dog.

"In what have I shown ignorance?" I inquired.

He stared at me, deep reproach in his brown eyes.

"And do you really not know who James Stephens is?"

"I do not."

He regarded me frankly.

"Oh, of course!" said he, finally. "To be sure *you* would not."

"Well," said I impatiently, "I'm waiting. At least, I'm willing to learn."

He sat down in the dust of the road and looked up at me with wise eyes; and his voice was curiously patient, though ironic, as he said:

Stephens is a man who is working in Dublin for three pounds a week. He would like to get more; but as he has no hope of it, so, also, he will not be disappointed if it does not come to pass. He is one of the few who understand the gift of words; and so he is not trying to misapply it.

I shall sing with my pen," he said. For some angel had whispered to him that it's a great thing to bring joy to the heart of man. For, you see, the angels know that the world is gray enough, and their promptings caused James Stephens to put into his finest book "The Crock of Gold" all the laughter in the world, all the poetry and all the wisdom. And if you can tell me what more should go into a book, I would like to hear it. You must read "The Crock of Gold" said he, "and then you must ask the man in the book shop for the other three. Perhaps it's best that I do not tell you their names. But this I will tell you. Get them one at a time, and read each of them at least twice—for Stevens is Irish, you see, and I doubt"—here he cocked his head at me valuingly—"well, perhaps you'll not understand him even then. No one but an Irishman could write these books. And no one but an Irishman could really understand them—unless, mark you, it be a person of rare imagination. And in that quality I have always taken the liberty to doubt you."

"Further understand," proceeded he, "that no German, however great, could have written 'The Crock of Gold'; no dark born Russian could even attempt it. Wilde, Stephens' own

countryman, would have given his soul to have written it; and as for Shaw, he stands in the valley, grimacing with his cap and bells, peering enviously up at that far peak where James Stephens stands, smiling, and listening to the still voices of beings who are kind to the world.

“And remember what the workman said of the modern scribes — some of them possess the gift, but have misunderstood its purpose. For it is not, mark you, the province of a writer to save men’s souls, any more than it is an architect’s. The men who so try to ruin their gift are the men who have never recovered from the surprise of discovering it. Their brains shook under the shock; they drew in long breaths and at once began to take themselves seriously — they immediately bethought themselves of the saving of men — they became young, neurasthenic Christs. The presumption of trying to save anyone! My point of view is far enough removed from man’s to see the folly of that. Man will never be saved; he will always continue a fool; for only as a fool does he fill the uses of nature. Wisdom for man is not normal; and the non-normal leads to madness.”

Here he paused; and as I looked ahead

there was no horizon; the road was quite dark. And when I started blindly forward, the terrier spoke again.

Hadn't we better turn back?" he suggested. Without question I turned, and before us lay the lights of the village — lights that seemed to bid one not to think, but to rest.

"You are going too far," said he, "that is your home; that is the place you have been so long looking for.

He gazed at me appealingly; and then, as I started to retrace my steps, he capered about, and leaped up at me in vast content.

*An epigram is never written. Someone
says it — somebody overhears it and
the third person remembers it.*

DEMOCRACY'S KING

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM

POINCARÉ

GEORGE

KERENSKY *

ALBERT

THE AMERICAN

EMMANUEL

Two guards and a number of children

[Curtain rises on last strains of "Star Spangled Banner." When up, "Taps" is heard in distance, then guard enters from right]

The scene is a charming orchard in autumn just at sunset. The soft amber light, filtering through the trees, gives an impression of unutterable peace until the eye is caught by a noose that sways gently from the limb of a dignified apple tree, which stands quite alone in the foreground — alone — as tho conscious of the importance of its mission. Someone has placed a long table just to the right of the apple tree with two stools at either side and one at the head facing the tree, another at the foot. There is a path running up to the right, tho

* Written at the time Kerensky was in power.

one can barely distinguish it now, as it is covered with leaves. Along this path heavy, crunching footsteps are heard, the dead leaves whistling in sharp protest.

[An armed guard enters and stands aside; he is followed by six hulking figures in various German uniforms. After them another guard, armed also, who stands beside his mate; the six figures skulk in the background. Then voices are heard as five gentlemen enter with grave faces, discussing very seriously something which has evidently upset them very much. They approach the table and stand about it a moment continuing their discussion before sitting, which they do quite informally]

POINCARÉ

It is unheard of.

EMMANUEL

Certainly, it has never been done [sits]

KERENSKY

Even I would not have asked for so much — and you — [sits]

[Turning to Albert]

ALBERT

I have no emotion left. As I said before — I do not care. It is over now — let him go [sits]

POINCARÉ [*excitedly*]

But the American will not — nor will he consider anything but this.

[*Looks up at the noose, shudders, then continues*]

And he decides it all with a smiling face — but when you try to move him — *Mon Dieu!*

[*George sits during this speech*]

[*Shrugs his shoulders*]

Then he is granite. You, Your Majesty, you said nothing at the conference.

[*Turning to George*]

GEORGE

I am at a loss — I am dumbfounded. It is not regular.

EMMANUEL

What to do? He will consider nothing less.

KERENSKY

After all, gentlemen, we must remember the agreement. It was thoroughly understood the American was not to be called in unless his voice decided the issue.

POINCARÉ [*gravely*]

That is true.

[*Steps are heard on the path*]

Hush! They are coming.

[*Each man rises. WILLIAM enters, his face white and drawn, all the actor out of him now. The sneaking figures in the shadow catch his eye and a bitter smile touches the corner of his mouth. The young American by his side is easy, graceful, unconcerned, as tho' out for an afternoon stroll. William sees the noose, pauses, the American gently touches him on the arm. He pulls himself together, and knowing what is expected of him walks firmly until he stands beneath the noose. The American joins the other gentlemen, offering them a cigarette; they look at him amazed as they politely decline. He gestures to them to be seated, as he takes the stool at the head of the table facing William. Albert looks at the American a moment, then seats himself at the foot, his head sinking wearily on his arms; the others seat themselves slowly, as tho' in a daze*]

THE AMERICAN

Well, gentlemen, it is the end. Let us get on with it; I regret to say that I must hasten home. There is important work waiting to be done.

[*They all stare at him again, except Albert, who remains motionless*]

William, have you anything to say? Any message to leave?

WILLIAM

There is nothing — it is finished.

THE AMERICAN [*contemplatively*]

You're a curious man, you know. You've failed at everything. You would be a musician, only to have your own people laugh in their sleeve. A patron of art — had you no one to tell you that art cannot be patronized? One may only serve it on one's knees. Whether to create or possess, it must be loved devotedly and tended abjectly. Had you a genius in your midst you were ever blind, but if there was a merchant prince's yacht in the harbor your eye was ever far-seeing and your hand ever ready to pin a medal on a brewer's breast.

WILLIAM [*contemptuously*]

What do you know of art in America? A Democracy.

THE AMERICAN

True, alas! There is no place for art in the building of a nation, but that only makes your crime the greater. When a prince mistook power for privilege democracy was born

and art was thrust aside, as an aged relative
— always in the way.

KERENSKY [*grimly*]

Art may wait a little longer. One can think
better on it with a belly full of food.

THE AMERICAN [*smiling*]

I daresay — I only mentioned it as one
of his many failures. But it was his last, his
most brilliant failure — that fascinates me,
the one that has brought us all together.
Tell me — [*Turning to Poincaré*] — had he
taken Paris when he thought to dine there,
would you have been beaten?

POINCARÉ [*simply*]

The French are never beaten.

THE AMERICAN [*slowly*]

No — *but* had he by any chance won, of
course the rest was simple, with forty years'
preparation, — [*Then turning to William*] —
the French beaten, the English, then unpre-
pared, would hardly have been a mouthful.
Then back to the Eastern front, and the
Russians with all their generals bribed would
have been easy for you, William, whilst
Nicholas waited to see what you would leave

for him. Then after a slight rest and a blessing upon God, your next move was South America, then North America, and after that the rest was simple. A damned interesting game — interesting indeed. I wonder if one man prevented its going through, and if he did it would be curious to know *just* how he feels about it.

[*Turning to Poincaré*]

You must ask Papa Joffre some day.

[*Poincaré gravely nods his head*]

But didn't it occur to you, William, that the God whom you were gracious enough to adopt as your nephew was by your side in very truth, nearer even than you imagined, just by your shoulder? Only, strange to say, He did not seem to agree with you as to the wisdom of your course. Perhaps that was why He caused every blow you struck to prove a boomerang (slight movement). For it has been a boomerang, William — *every single blow*. Have you thought of that?

[*The others look up at this, even Albert slightly raises his head. This thought had not occurred to them before*]

WILLIAM

[*Looks a moment at the American, then slowly up at the noose above his head, then*

back to the American again. He begins very deliberately]

It is not the moment for anything except the truth. What you have said is perfectly correct, young man. I had a dream —

[Now his gaze shifts to the setting sun, and he continues as tho' oblivious of them for a moment — in a spirit of exaltation]

Such a wonderful dream. *Ach Gott!* I was on the mountain top forever looking down upon you all. Everything that Caesar and Napoleon failed to do I meant to accomplish. My beautiful language was to be the only tongue in the world, everywhere *my flag!* so that in the centuries to come my people would always kneel in gratitude to the memory of William the Greatest.

[Then mournfully his gaze returns to the American]

And it has come to this — are you satisfied?

[The American rises to answer; WILLIAM gestures him to sit again]

One moment — I have not finished. You truly said each blow has been a boomerang, but you neglected to properly sum up the result.

[Then proudly]

I have re-created you all. What you are and what you may be in the future is the result

of my work. *Mark that well.* I would have been the world's Emperor, the epitome of imperialism — that was my ambition. It is fate that I must go down into history as Democracy's King. Truly, the Ironic God was at my shoulder. But, at least, you will admit that the little game I played resulted in producing *one* King who did not mistake power for privilege, Albert — try to found a democracy in Belgium if you dare.

[*Whimsically*]

Tho' you might in Italy some day — *perhaps*, eh? Emmanuel? And yet my little game was of some slight service to you also; at least I turned a bad poet into a good soldier.

EMMANUEL

I do not care for you, or the poet either. If they want democracy they can have it; I only want my garden.

WILLIAM

[*Then mournfully again*]

As ye reap — oh, my God! Now I understand — if we had all been as Albert, your democracy — [*to American*]

[*Contemptuously*]

had never been born.

[*Then turning to George, his eye lighting now*]
George! You thought I hated England; you were wrong.

GEORGE

I thought nothing. [*Pause*] I wish my grandmother had been here to deal with you — all this might have been avoided. Even my father understood you. I never wanted the responsibility —

[*With sudden heat*]

Why did you not let us alone?

WILLIAM

Why did I not let you alone? Because I envied you your commercial supremacy. Yours is the greatest market place in the world; you are the greatest salesmen. It has ever been so, and now, oh God! it will *ever* be so. And you conquer in commerce whilst you play — *your* golf — *your* cricket — *your* shooting. “It is a fine day” — you say; “let us go out and kill something.” And *yet you win, playing* at the thing I am most serious about — *business*. — It is baffling. Why did I not let you alone indeed? That was my greatest folly. You were dying slowly — surely dying; senility was on you, the fog was in your brain. Commercially you were rotting; the world was passing you by; the

sleep of centuries was coming o'er your eyes, and I, like a fool, awakened you. To-day you are younger and stronger than you have ever been. Tell me, to whom do you owe your youth?

[*American rises, goes upstage, George looks away*]

No, I did not hate the English, George, tho' I did hate — shall I tell you whom? The French!

[*POINCARÉ looks at him startled*]

Yes, *your* people — I hated from the bottom of my soul because they knew how to laugh

[*All move looking from one to other*]

whilst I could only make a guttural sound — a hideous noise, most repulsive. Ah! how the French can laugh, and what is supremacy without laughter?

POINCARÉ

You have found we can be *serious* also, eh?

WILLIAM

I care nothing for that. You have won, and it is over. It was the child in you that beat me, Poincaré, the happy, laughing child that is in the heart of every Frenchman. Be content that you are the greatest nation on earth — *now* — tho' you too were dying. Tell me, who has made you strong again?

[*Poincaré stares, unable to answer*]

As for you, my man, —

[*Looking at Kerensky*]

had Nicholas not been a fool you would still be in Siberia. Since you would rule accept a word from an old hand at the game: Beware of fanaticism; it's as dangerous as imperialism. And if you are honest tell your people that Russia, the home of bribery and corruption, was cleansed and made ready for freedom by the blow of William, the failure. Now, gentlemen, you may complete this ceremony, and yet my work is not complete altho' it is near the end. Young man from across the sea —

[*Looking at the American*]

do you think it wise to pull this rope before I have completely taken the paunch off America?

THE AMERICAN

[*Looking at him quickly, then his face becoming very grave*]

It is true, William, that you've done a good day's work, and also that the paunch must come off. But that we must leave in the hands of God. You see, I trust Him, whereas you directed Him. Observe, William, it is an apple tree you stand under. Do you not know the wisdom of the fable? God did not

forbid the apple because He was especially fond of it but simply to teach Adam inhibition.

[Then rising]

Are you ready, William?

WILLIAM

Yes.

[The American signals one of the guards, who goes off into the shadow. The American approaches William, taking a bit of string out of his pocket, speaking as he approaches and during the following tying William's hands behind his back]

THE AMERICAN

You always wanted to be first, William; now your wish is gratified unless, by any chance, one of the six to follow would prefer to play the leading part? *[laugh]*

[The six figures in the shadow fall upon their knees, wailing and groaning. Then the happy laughter of many, many children is heard.]

WILLIAM

[Starting apprehensively]

What is that?

THE AMERICAN

That? Nothing, only the laughter of children.

WILLIAM [*nervously*]

What do they here?

THE AMERICAN [*reproachfully*]

You ask that, William? I am surprised. Why, after you they play the principal part. They are to pull the rope.

[*All men rise — exclamation*]

WILLIAM

No! No! You wouldn't — you couldn't! It's the revenge of a fiend from hell. My God, no! Not at the hands of children.

[*The laughter is heard again*]

THE AMERICAN [*In his ear*]

Are you shuddering because you fear it will soil them? That is good of you, William, but do not fear; I have told them it is a little game they are playing — just a little game *for them* as you played yours *for yourself*.

[*The laughter comes again (one short peal)*]

Their laughter is simply an echo of the moans of their little brothers and sisters.

[*Children run on, laughing*]

[*A groan breaks from William as a hundred laughing children enter, some picking up the rope, others surrounding William, putting their arms around him and shouting in their childish voices*]

"Come, Uncle William, let's play Lusitania."

[*William shrinks from them, hoarsely crying*]

WILLIAM

No! No!

[*The others take up the cry*]

"Yes, Uncle William, let's play Lusitania. You go up and we go down."

[*Albert's head is bowed upon his arms, also George; Emmanuel is praying; Kerensky turns down right, unable to stand the strain; Poincaré staggers off, as the children, continuing the cry, take the rope and retreat off into the dusk. The sun has set. The rope is a straight line like a tight rope ready for a performance; the American has the noose in his hands. As he settles it over the head of William the curtain descends to the sound of the low, hoarse sobbing of the six figures in the shadow, and the laughing cries of the children*]

"Let's play Lusitania, Uncle William — you go up and we go down."

[*After children's voices die away in distance, sound "Taps" and on last strains ring curtain*]

Immortality reaches its apex when one is inefficient and sits in a high place.

WHY SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY AN ACTOR

A DINNER arranged by a friend with an outrageous appetite for discussion brought us face to face one night with an ardent advocate of the Baconian theory. The terrific fascination which all mediocre reasoning compels, held us spellbound for the moment. However, the spirit of charity triumphed, and although knowing the futility of trying to create, on barren soil, we bravely cut into the ivory, and only admitted failure, when the poor blunted knife snapped indignantly, preferring death to such a hopeless expedition. And only weariness, that insufferable weariness which only boredom can bring; and is invariably created by the reasoning of college professors, when discussing creative work, leads us back to this time-worn question.

It sounds too feeble to quote the reasoning of our Baconian friend, but I fear it is necessary, for after all, it is practically the reasoning of all Baconian theorists, — to wit, —

that it was impossible for Shakespeare to have acquired the education necessary for the writing of these plays, that their great literary beauty was impossible of achievement except at the hands of a scholar, etc., etc., — in short, the gentleman proved most carefully that two and two make four.

In the first place, we feebly admit that we do not know what a scholar is. William Archer once disclaimed being one with a rather grateful note in his voice, but had he thought the peculiar product worthy of analysis, he might have found that it spells a brain crammed with bits of knowledge on various subjects, and no ability to master any one. Not for a moment, however, should one decry education; it is a splendid thing, but at best only polishes the diamond. In creative work it has achieved nothing! A study of the great psychologists will enhance the knowledge of a philosophic mind, but that study is useless unless the brain has a very natural aptitude for the subject. As to two and two making four — that is perfectly absurd. Two and two make five when Shakespeare or Goethe, or even a musician like Strauss cracks his whip. And all that to this effect, — and I crave for this point the reader's grave consideration — *it would have*

been a much more remarkable thing for Lord Bacon to have possessed the knowledge of the technique of the stage which these plays betray than it would have been for Mr. Shakespeare to have possessed sufficient education to write them.

Their literary quality is not their dominant trait, all the college professors in christendom to the contrary, although it is most difficult to prove this to the layman's mind. No genuine student of play construction requires any explanation of this statement. The simple fact suffices. Ibsen would understand it at once, and betray genuine surprise that anyone doubted it. No dilettante versifier in the theatre could ever know it, nor would he understand what one was driving at, and no amount of explanation would convince him. But for those who can "smell" the situation, for those who have any "nostrils" for the theatre at all a few instances will be sufficient.

Let us remember that Mercutio is killed not so much by Tybalt's skilful fencing as by Romeo's stupid interference. *That is drama.* In warring interests it is always the innocent bystander who suffers. Further, it is not the literary quality that commends Mercutio's speech to us.

“No: ’tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but ’tis enough — ’twill serve: I am peppered, I warrant for this world. — A plague on both your houses! — What! a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart, a rogue, a villain, that fights by the book of arithmetic! — Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm.”

Not the literary quality but the philosophic reasoning of this “gets us.” Any more than it was the poetic value in Burns’ lines which made them beautiful, but again the philosophic reasoning, and that one does not get in school.

“Now wad the power, the gift to gi’e us
To see ourselves as ithers see us.”

The cunningly wrought interest, the tenseness, the suspense of the trial scene in the “Merchant of Venice.” There we have wonderfully wrought drama — wonderfully wrought indeed by the master-hand of the theatre. He leads the audience up to the knife at the breast before he gives them relief by telling that the Jew must get his pound of flesh but . . .

PORTIA.

“Shed thou no blood; nor cut thou less nor more
But just a pound of flesh: if thou takest more
Or less than a just pound — be it but so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance,

Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple! nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimate of a hair, —
Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.”

GRATIANO.

“A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!
Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.”

Is that literature? Of course, but the literary quality must take second place to the dramatic. It is in “the drama” that the situation is dominant — the Jew tricked and the scales turned in Gratiano’s exultant repetition of Shylock’s phrase. Who else but an old trickster of the theatre would have expected us to believe that Portia’s disguise could have deceived Bassanio! That trick was in keeping with Augustus Thomas’ putting a stamp on an envelope in a situation in “Arizona,” and then declaring the communication under the protection of the United States Government, despite the fact that we all know the government is *not* responsible until the letter is in its charge. Or William Gillette’s trick in perhaps the finest melodrama written in twenty years, namely, “Secret Service” wherein the Southern spy tries to prevent the Northern spy sending his message over the wires by drawing the General’s attention to the fact that the

signature is *pasted* on the message. Thorn's answer is: "They often come that way, Sir," *and gets away with it*. Ask Mr. Gillette or Mr. Thomas, and we will wager that they will confess that these tricks are only the result of a knowledge of the theatre learned by serving the institution patiently on their knees for years. The knocking on the gate, after the murder of Duncan which makes Macbeth quake with fear and results in Macduff's entrance, the man who is going to kill him in the end. Theatre! Theatre! Theatre! and such perfect theatre!

Hamlet's scene with Marcellus and Horatio in which he makes them swear.

HAMLET.

"Never to speak of this that you have seen,
Swear by my sword.

GHOST. [*Beneath*]

Swear.

HAMLET.

Hic et ubique? then we'll shift our ground
Come hither, gentlemen,
And lay your hands again upon my sword:
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.

GHOST. [*Beneath*]

Swear.

HAMLET.

Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioneer! Once more remove, good friends."

His father murdered, the boy's desire to revenge his death. His agony of mind in trying to concentrate on that, and insure no interference or miscarriage of his plans, by swearing his friends to secrecy, and the terrific mental torment he feels on hearing the Ghost's unrest in the ground in his constant repetition "Swear," the effort to escape from the tragedy in that cry from the cold ground in "then we'll shift our ground" and again in "Once more remove, good friends," this is sheer theatre at its best, just as the Ghost's visitation in the closet scene to remind Hamlet of his oath when the boy is pleading with his mother "go not to mine uncle's bed" — "Assume a virtue if you have it not," is one of the most pathetic situations the stage has ever seen, and when properly played the audience would be too limp with tears to care a button whether the scene held any literary quality or not. In fact the over emphasis of the literary quality in the plays is as damnable as the bad acting we see so often in them, and as answerable for the fact that they are performed so infrequently. The actor's "mouthing" of his resonant speech, and his love for his bell-like tones befogs the issue, and is cousin indeed to the "reading in" by

grave college professors of meanings the dramatist "wotted not of."

The famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy is a striking instance of a cardinal error indulged in by scholarly actors, LL.D.'s, B.A.'s, etc., etc. Their countless discussions as to the correct emphasis in reading must have caused Shakespeare to wake again with laughing. Correct reading is only an extraneous thing in acting. Though necessary in verse, it should never become paramount to the principal work in hand, which is to convey the "thought" of a scene by showing the audience quite clearly, the subject in the mind of the character, regardless of what he or she is saying at the moment. Thus when Hamlet in welcoming Horatio says — "We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart" his mind is wondering at the fact that the court can follow its usual bent, and, Great God! his mother can ask him why he grieves for his father who is only two months dead. "Nay, not so much, not two." If this method is followed in "To be or not to be," silly discussion as to emphasis must cease and the principal point, namely, that the speech is a psychological reasoning upon "suicide," would be brought out. When this is done an actor may defy his severest

critic, — nay, even his best friend to discover what emphasis he employs because he has succeeded in making his audience “unconscious” as they should be — his plaything for the moment, to laugh or cry as he bids them. He must conquer them to live — else he is eaten. It is the tamer in a cage with a lion.

As it is probable that Bacon visited Venice and certainly Shakespeare did not, it is easy to surmise that William gleaned from him any necessary knowledge regarding detail of “locale,” and over a drink in an inn have Bacon correct the startling error of calling Bleeker Street, Houston. Further, it is probable that as Dr. Brandes points out Shakespeare cribbed bodily the plot of the “Merchant” as a good artist takes what he needs — just as he did the plot of “Hamlet” from Saxo Grammaticus. His “treatment,” not his plot, or his poetry, made his success theatrically. Anyone might have thought of Ibsen’s plot of the “Master Builder,” but who could have given it that treatment?

An amusing instance of theatre versus literature, or at least an attempt at literature occurred when Sir Herbert Tree invited a dozen men to hear a play that Zangwill wrote called “The War God.” Zangwill

evidently conscious at last, of a fact which critics had been trying to point out to him for years, namely, that he had never written a play in prose, this time attempted one in verse. In his anxiety to write verse, he took the unfortunate drama, throttled it and threw it into the street. The different men present when asked their opinion upon the play said variously "I like it." "It interested me immensely." "I thought it most engrossing." "I was most favorably impressed," etc., etc. Lawrence Irving suggested that it might have been better if written in prose. When our opinion was asked, the sense of politeness, compelling us to live up to the tradition, that we are cowboys over here, made us bluntly declare that it was not a play at all, pointing out that the man, in his desire to show that he could write verse, which, incidentally, "The Duchess" would have been ashamed of, had forgotten the drama, and, as an illustration, reminded the gentlemen present that Sir Herbert Tree had a play on in his theatre then by Mr. Shakespeare, namely, "Henry VIII," and, in that, the author had never presumed to suppress drama for anything he had to say, however poetic. The curtain is not up two minutes in "Henry VIII" when we have the arrest

of Buckingham, and although Mr. Zangwill's play was a struggle between the God of War and the God of Peace, there was no conflict of any sort, either physical or mental. "Henry VIII" ran 360 nights and Zangwill's play ran for two performances! Good poetry didn't make William here, any more than bad poetry ruined Israel. One observed the "theatre," the other ignored it. One could go on giving countless instances, but, after all, it is useless for those with a petty fogging pedantic attitude toward either the stage or literature would not understand.

So, may we have done with literary speeches or authors' opinions, at the expense of the theatre — they are charging themselves a heavy price — the short life of their work.

Shaw constantly interrupts the direct action of his plays, more especially his latter work, to give his opinions — amateur sociology worthy of an idle afternoon in Hyde Park — whilst Strindberg's respect for the "theatre" is shown not only by an absolutely "non-literary" treatment in "The Father," but, further, he never discusses his subject in the plot; therefore, he never says a word against the *unconscious* tyranny of women, *but shows it*.

Shakespeare after all made his own lan-

guage. He did not need schools to give him that, and any knowledge of medicine or law which his plays betray, books of reference could have given to a puppet. As Frank Harris points out: "Shakespeare took a low Dutch dialect, rescued it from oblivion and enriched it some seven or eight hundred words:" and if a digression may be permitted, we would like to add that it is a poet's business to dally with a language in the sense of attempting to correct it; that it is the height of presumptuous ignorance for a successful ironmaster or an adventurous politician to dare to correct the spelling of it. We are treated by these gentlemen, who should be knitting in the marketplace, to the benign advice that we shall spell the glorious word "night" n-i-t-e, thus robbing the word of its splendid dignity, sullyng its whole significance, and further ridiculing its silent mystery.

Therefore, in conclusion may we dare to hope that the pedantry which denies "creative genius" is answered. Moral: a college professor after all has one thing in common with a genius — he is born not made.

A bad liver sometimes produces a great philosopher.

1914

[82]

BETWEEN OURSELVES

I DARE say it came from looking into the fire so long. Hickory logs properly used are seductive things, and as the sea will produce strange things if gazed upon long enough, I presume we must not be surprised when a wood fire turns conjurer. At any rate, without further preamble — there, as I live, before me, rolled out from the ashes a human heart, throbbing for all the world as though it were feebly gasping for air. I blinked in a bewildered way, thinking, “Now you are indeed mad,” yet hoping it would only prove to be the phantom result of after-dining napping — yet no — I was awake right enough — but I had no time for further amazement, for lo! it began to speak — and amazement changed to a feeling of fascinated horror.

“You look very comfortable sitting there.” (A deep hole in its side seemed to give it utterance — and, looking closer, I found it covered with many, many tiny holes like pin pricks — oh! so many — and they looked for all the world like little wounds.) It con-

tinued, "If a casual acquaintance — or even a friend — entered this room now, they would think you were happy and at peace with all the world" — Umph! If I could only laugh. (It really seemed to stretch itself wearily in the ashes.) "I suppose you're surprised that I've come to have a talk with you — well, you needn't be, and, for goodness sake, don't look so idiotically amazed. Goodness knows you've taken me out of my peaceful home often enough, and offered me freely in the market place." (This with a marked note of irritation.) "May I not leave it now for a sensible reason — for I certainly hope that after we've finished this chat — at least after I've finished talking and you've listened intently enough — I may go back in peace to your breast and assume my proper, normal, and sane — mark you, I said sane, functions."

My attitude became befittingly meek. It continued — with a nasty note of derision creeping into its tone — "Of course, I never could understand why you felt it necessary, upon all occasions, including holidays, to drag me forth into the blinding sun, and never, by any chance, grant me the courtesy of 'by your leave,' or 'if you don't mind,' or even 'to oblige me,' but no — your daz-zling ego put the reins into your own hands

for, of course, you, of all people, must do everything from the head. The head indeed! (The scorn here sent sparks up the chimney.) Then, sneeringly, "O, you think the head manages so well — you fool! — women have none, yet observe how well they manage — and as for your head, dear me, you never apply it at all — dreaming isn't using it, my boy. You spend your time flattering yourself because you don't sneer. Your inaction brings defeat, and then, with lordly impertinence and crass ignorance, you cast the blame at my door, whereas, as a matter of fact, in all important things, you consult neither your head nor myself — in fact — looking at you again (this in a loathsome, critical tone) I rather suspect that your chief adviser and boon companion is your liver" — A shocked expression here seemed to make no impression whatever, for the scathing tone only deepened. "Pray, don't think for a moment that because the liver and myself are neighbors that we are friends. As a matter of fact, we have not even a speaking acquaintance — I help it of course as I do the rest of your body — but that's only my duty. However, that's a digression. To resume — what I want to talk about, or really, to complain of, is your treatment of me.

“Time and time again, as long as I can remember, I have implored you to let me rest in peace. I found great pleasure in attending to my duties, and asked for nothing — except a little moderate exercise — and that only to enable me to take better care of you, but no — I must be dragged out to meet this one, and that, — at one time it’s what you call a ‘pal.’ Oh!” (with a terrible groan). “How full your youth was of those! Why didn’t you use them all just for companionship? That’s all they did with you. Why bring me into it? Every time you took me out and carelessly handed me over to one of those, I was dropped just as carelessly on the floor, and sometimes even on the street, although I’ll admit that it was in your adventure with the opposite sex that I invariably found myself on the pavement, — generally in the gutter, — at the mercy of taxis, cabs, and drays, — my only friend a prowling dog; somehow they always seemed to understand, and, after a sniff or two, they would help me find the way home. The only time you’ve ever given me human treatment was when you were ill — then, sometimes we’d have a real chat. But, when you were well, and could go out into the crowd, then the fatiguing grind began all over again.

How I loved your chance acquaintances, and even your enemies! Whilst you thought of them I got a real rest, — but your friends — really, although I know you are very stupid — even you must laugh now when you look back; there were one or two real ones. How gladly I'd have gone to them. But, of course, being a stupid ass, you *took* from them and gave *nothing* in return." (Here I shifted uneasily and attempted an expostulation, but a sort of dignity the thing took on, stopped me.) "Why won't you ever learn that men use each other, and that the one who cares the most always gets the worst of it? It's amusing to see the unconscious bullying that goes on amongst you. It's really strange, but your friendships are not a bit different from your love affairs. You meet a man. The new personality strikes — each bored with his list of friends — and you go through each other rapidly. Of course, there's a moment — the confessional stage — when you both think that this time it's for life. I know *you* do, poor fool, and then very gradually you become bored again. The stories and adventures are repeated, a trifle stale now. You see faults in each other, and then — I breathe a sigh of relief as I find myself back at home in my quiet, cosy nest. But, alas!

I know (this in a very mournful tone) that you won't allow me to rest for very long. Sometimes I wonder if I resent the 'Pals' more than I do the love affairs, for the men can hurt too. But, after all, there's no difference, as I've told you; they are just like love affairs, though, of course, really the women hurt the most, though what I'm so very indignant about is that I never got any real enjoyment out of it.

"Once or twice you've really fooled even me. Once, particularly, and it's difficult to refrain from profanity when I look at you and think what I went through then. Don't you realize that I have serious work to do in your body? And don't you realize that it's quite impossible to do it when you bounce me around like a rubber ball? Oh my! Oh my! What I went through in that particular case — taken out — laid at her feet — only to be trampled on. Then, sometimes she'd look down at me and a sense of pity would come over her, I suppose. At any rate she'd warm me in her soft hands and sometimes, only sometimes, she'd put me in her breast, and I admit that was quite wonderful. But, of course, I only got in there when you cared least. Why in the name of common sense you didn't keep the ball whilst it was in your

hands, I can't understand. You had her heart — wasn't that good enough for you? Her breast was wonderful, I admit. I was quite comfortable — but no! instead of playing your hand like a man, you must flounder around at her feet; let her see that she had you, and then, of course, I was thrown out again — and generally the weather was cold. Don't you realize that woman isn't old enough yet to be given power? No. Of course you must tell her that she's wonderful and that you're a weak fool. Then she, like an ass, believes that, and thinks you smaller than any man she knows. Or worse still, you have her kick me out over some stupid quarrel. She talks rot and is unreasonable, and you, like the perfect fool you are, must needs try to reason with her. You talk logic instead of listening quietly — logic to a woman!! — and worse, a woman in love with you. Several times I've started to talk with your brain on this particular case, but ye gods! it was worse than your liver, — and all the time I'm bounced back and forth between the two of you quite as though I were made of clay — my work all going to ruin, and complaints pouring in all day from the rest of your body, just as though *I* were the loafer.

“And the strange places I'd find myself —

now at the foot of a mountain — again, on the floor of a motor car, stepped on, wedged in the door, or rolled into the gutter. When you two quarreled it was all one to you both. I could take care of myself as far as you were concerned. Upon my word, it's disgraceful. How you ever expect me to feel, to be able to give anything when I really care — I don't know, it's beyond me. For, of course, you know the day will come when I will care. I wonder if you know just the kind of emotion it will be? I doubt it — though I'll tell you this much about it. For the first time, what you are pleased to call your brain, and myself, will be really friends, and in the meanwhile, I wish you'd stop staring moodily at me, and instead, have just a little politeness. Pick me up now, out of the ashes, and for once handle me a little tenderly, and gently place me back where I belong, and get the idea out of your head that it's dark and lonely in there. It isn't. On the contrary, it's rather warm and cosy — not half a bad sort of breast, if you'd give it half a chance, and do remember, that I'm simply aching for a *good, long rest*. And please look long and well before you take me out again for what you call a 'pal' and, as for a woman, — well, you'll know when I want to come out

for 'her,' for I'll thump and thump as though to break your side — even you will understand — and I'll send you back instead such a gentle, sweet, little heart that you'll tremble every day in wonderment of your luck, and gaze with eyes of awe upon a world that can bring you so much happiness."

*The truth is very strange — the only way
to depend upon not finding it is to
consort with mediocrity.*

ARTISTIC REASONING*

BY BERNARD SHAW ?

It is so annoying that just as I had filled my knapsack with ink and opinions to hurry to the front and persuade our soldiers to shoot their officers in the back and go home, that I must turn my attention to this man Daly again. Ever since I first heard of him he has been a thorn in my side.

Some eleven or twelve years ago, when anyone could do my plays without the slightest difficulty, certainly without troubling to get my consent, this man conceived the idea of producing "Candida." My books were quietly reposing in the dust on Brentano's shelves, and my opinions then hit no one except the casual passerby in Hyde Park.

This production of "Candida" was produced in the lowest possible manner. Bored with bad parts and bad plays, this insane man staged my masterpiece with a capital

* This was written at the time of Mr. Daly's revival of the Shaw plays which occasioned Mr. Shaw's refusal to allow Mr. Daly to continue to act in them.

of \$350.00 and although I tried to discourage him by charging him ten per cent of the gross receipts as a royalty (being a humanitarian and an up-lifter of the theatre I believe in charging a higher royalty than any other author) nevertheless, he blundered on and pawned his insurance papers, and borrowed money from his friends where'er he could to continue the run of the play. Had he a grain of sense he would have abandoned it and not grubbed his way through the dirt.

This production proved successful, however, despite his low methods, and he then followed it with "A Man of Destiny," "How He Lied to Her Husband," and "You Never Can Tell." By this time we realized in London that it was the rain that caused us to fail when we had attempted the plays before, and so we tried again, and this time we were more or less successful. I even risked some ha'pence myself, although naturally, I did not charge our Court Theatre venture the ten per cent royalty.

Daly followed "You Never Can Tell" with John Bull's "Other Island," and failed. Imagine that now! Failed with one of my plays, despite the fact that the play dealt with Catholicism, Protestantism and the land question, subjects upon which the New York

public mind seethes with interest. How could I forgive him that failure? And yet I tried. After all, his one failure ruined him while I still had my ten per cent of the gross.

He then produced "Mrs. Warren's Profession", and he would have succeeded with that had he not courted failure by dubbing my friend Antony Comstock, a "genial comedian." Later he took to the road with "You Never Can Tell", and during his road tour, for a time, I ceased to demand my ten per cent, and if any further proof is necessary that this man Daly is mad, instead of keeping that ten per cent for himself, he put it to the credit of the books so that his manager, a kind hearted Brooklyn politician, benefited.

Then he produced "Arms and the Man," and again he succeeded, although continually annoying me by never following my advice.

Also, he persuaded Frederick Whitney to stage "Arms and the Man" in London. I gave my consent to the performance upon condition that I stage the play. At the second rehearsal, Sir Charles Wyndham, who, by the way, knows nothing about the theatre, assured Daly that if the play were given as I was rehearsing it, the London critics would declare that it was a jolly good thing that it had been turned into a musical comedy. The

performance was highly praised by the London critics, although Daly's performance was too absurd. The London Times, a ridiculously conservative sheet, declared that Daly was the best "Bluntschli" London had seen, despite the fact that three Englishmen had played the part previously, and James Douglas, in a special article, was silly enough to say that he acted as Melba sings and as Pavlova dances. How could I be expected to stand that? His plan was also to revive "Candida" and "You Never Can Tell" in London, but that did not suit me, although I had promised him that he could do so. Sir J. M. Barrie and myself were risking our pennies at the Little Theatre and had just opened with "Fanny's First Play." We could not have a man as irresponsible as Daly playing against us in London, so I refused my consent to his revival of "Candida," upon the plea of his age. I pointed out that it would be ridiculous for him to attempt to look so young, whereupon he answered that I was only insulting his make-up box.

Finally he wore me out until I had to tell him the truth, which I did over the telephone. I told him that we were uncertain of the future of "Fanny's First Play" and had to hold "Candida" in reserve for the Little

Theatre and assured him that we had more sagacity than Sir Henry Irving. Irving was stupid enough to treat the stage as an art and invited Edwin Booth to alternate rôles with him. We could not afford such nonsense. I might have consented to Daly touring in the provinces, but when he had the impertinence to change a piece of business in the last act of "Arms and the Man" between "Raïena" and "Sergius," then I put my foot down. I wrote him that he would never do a play of mine again, and certainly I intend to keep my word. What do I care if my contracts are illegal? Why should I have equity in them? That would be stupid. I'm a sensible man, therefore I make all my contracts to give Shaw all the best of it and to give the other party as little as possible.

In London we do not permit the actor-manager to have anything to say in his theatre whatsoever. His only liberty is to pay the actors' salaries and the authors' fees. If we allowed him freedom he might make a success, whereas we manage to fail frequently. This annoying man, Daly, proved to me conclusively that the play "The Thunder Bolt" would have been a success if handled by a genuine producer, and it's very annoying to admit that he was right.

Now some producing firm has sprung up in New York with the idea of reviving three of my plays in which Daly has made a success, and they have engaged him to play in these revivals, but I shall stop them at any cost. Of course, I have no right to stop them. My agent in New York has given them a contract, but that doesn't matter. I shall stop them anyhow. I have cabled my lawyer to spare no expense to do so. I cannot have Daly commencing a season just as I have Barker safely launched at Wallack's Theatre. I was immediately apprised by cable of this man's intention. Of course, some people may be low minded enough to suspect that it was Barker who cabled me, but that idea must be dismissed at once. How could Barker afford to try and stop Daly? Barker's season, after all, is backed by American capital, therefore, how could he afford to have this done? What would the American gentleman interested for artistic reasons in his venture think of him then? No! No! He is too high-minded, being even as I, a humanitarian. One must not be too severe regarding the incident of his trying to sell Daly the American rights to Ibsen's "Master Builder." Daly was young, a cow-boy in art, and required a lesson.

This mad man, Daly, has just cabled me that he is going to try next year to land at Moscow, Berlin, Paris or London, and see whether a group of millionaires will hand him 15,000 pounds to teach the local artistic idea how to shoot instead of looking for cigars in his baggage. Another reason, if it is necessary to quote further, why I do not want this season to go on is that I fear that it may be backed by money made in that low born trade, the moving picture business. Of course I have no proof of this, but I must admit that if the man had some millionaires back of him or had a rich wife I might reconsider my decision.

More annoyance. Another cable from this troublesome man bidding me fill my artistic soul with the inspiration of justice and truth instead of bothering myself with notoriety and petty meannesses, and this simply because I wrote him once that genius without moral conduct was a filthy cloak. He asks me to write a play for the real theatre and bids me leave politics to those who understand it, and, crowning insult of all, suggests that I resign the front page of the daily papers to the Kaiser.

April 1915.

MORALITY

That which tends to degrade, impede or discourage that which is best in one is immoral.

That which tends to encourage, enlighten and assist that which is best in one — is moral. Hence, one may get one's inspiration from a wanton or one's death sentence from a saint.

GOSSIP

A FABLE

THE Lion was always deeply grieved when he thought of his friend, the Bat, because he never saw the light. "It is good to look at the sun," said he, as he rolled on his back and blinked, "even though it sometimes hurts your eyes."

Then he scratched his tawny belly and thought for a while. After thinking a very long time, he discovered that he was hungry. Now, he would have liked a nice fat deer, but then, he was comfortable where he was — the necessity bored him.

And so he said, "Skat!"

Now the Squirrel thought he said "cat" and ran to warn her. Then they both climbed a nice, comfy, protecting tree. The Squirrel was angry, for in climbing the tree he dropped an armful of nuts. "It is a pity," he said, "for I like nuts," and was always out hunting them.

The Cat looked down from the high, pro-

tecting branch and thought for a long while what it could say to the Lion. Then her face brightened — she had thought of something at last.

“I have beautiful whiskers, too, just as beautiful as yours,” said she, but the Lion only looked up very bored and said, “What does it matter?” and went on licking his paw, because he just then remembered that it was bruised.

A LETTER WRITTEN TO A NEW YORK
PLAYWRIGHT

HOTEL MATIGNON,
AVENUE MATIGNON,
Paris, VIII.

Dec. 19, 1919.

SOME three weeks ago Mr. George MacLellan sent me the following wire from London:

‘Would you be at liberty play lead ‘— —
—’ open Haymarket Theatre February first
wire Savoy.’

I answered that I could arrange it as my present contract expires about December 22d.

Negotiations followed and you know the rest. You refused your consent to my engagement. Now then an interesting question arises: If a man writes a play, undeniably he has the right to use his judgment and authority in the selection of the cast; but when he steals the play from an Austrian, withholds the author’s name from the play-bills, and the said author’s royalties — a condition made possible only because of the

war — has he the same right? When a man becomes a moral, artistic and material thief, has he the right to prevent an actor from a possible honest, artistic and material success? It seems strange — but it is so since you decide it, my Emperor.

Why? Because I pointed out to you where your stage direction was amateurish when you staged ‘— — —’ and yet you accepted my suggestions, but with battle instead of gratitude: also, have you forgotten the budding period of your career as dramatist? The hours I spent with thee, dear Raffles — correcting your childish efforts and patiently teaching you construction are as a string of smiles to me, with your present contemptible action reminding me of your small soul.

Why people continually caress a scorpion when they want a kiss is beyond me, but have it your own way. You asked for it and so I send you a letter of truth. You might have suspected that I would not take a blow lying down.

Don’t sue — I haven’t any money, and when I get some, I’ll take care that my creditors get it before you. But, upon my return home, you may advance, Falstaff, and throw thy ponderous jellied self upon my mercy.

December 28, 1916

MR. ARNOLD DALY,
The Fulton Theatre,
West 46th Street,
NEW YORK CITY.

My dear Sir:

With my wife and four friends I saw "The Master" last Tuesday evening, and I want to tell you that I never was so disgusted in my life. What is the purpose of it all? Is it to show the superiority of the morals of the East over the West? Is it to uphold practising medicine or surgery without a state certificate? Is it to advocate license to immorality? What is it? I confess I don't know.

I read the other day of a business house that has in its window these words: "Your money is simply on deposit here until you are satisfied." It would be a good motto for all theatres, and for the present for the Fulton in particular.

The only bright streak in an otherwise dark night was the small house, together with your "between the acts" speech — "Two meals a day may be good for the soul, but it's hard on the body." In this you paid a

compliment to the New York theatre-going public.

Give us something good and wholesome, or else label your play in such a way that the unsuspecting public will know what it is buying.

Very truly yours,
ROBERT GORDON MCGREGOR.

December 30th, 1916.

THE ANSWER

My dear Dr. McGregor:

Since you make a *business* of preaching the Word of God, it is quite natural that you do not understand it. The dusty necessity of scraping in trade chokes the soul. And since culture, and gentleness too, are a part of your profession, one easily understands how greatly — judging by your rudeness — you misunderstand its message.

The purposes of this play, as you understand it, would not have been ascribed to it even by a private detective. For your enlightenment, therefore, I will spare a moment to tell you what the play means.

It is a denial of the Nietzschean theory. It is a plea for the involuntary, as being supe-

rior to the voluntary. If the State guards the individual too much, it loses his best endeavor. Even sloth is a good thing — it gives you something to get out of.

Further, the play shows the bitter truism that the weak destroy the strong, for they not only prey upon them — they drag them down.

Come and sit at my feet some night and I will teach you wisdom.







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